

MALTHOUSE FIRE,

LLANBLETHIAN

(Glamorgan Gazette 1873)

DESTRUCTIVE FIRE AT LLANBLETHIAN.

About mid-night, on Friday last, a fire broke out at the malthouses belonging to Mr. Wm. Thomas, Hill-house, Llanblethian, which for some hours raged with great fury, totally destroying the combustible material of the buildings, and leaving merely a mass of smoking ruins. These malthouses were constructed at great expense by the proprietor, and in addition to the loss of the building, nearly 2000 bushels of corn were entirely destroyed. The fire was discovered by a casual passer, who immediately aroused the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, who readily turned out to assist in extinguishing the furious enemy, and owing to there being no engine nearer than Cardiff, little could be done with buckets of water, more especially from the dryness of the malthouse. The cause of this catastrophe is at present totally obscure. A servant employed by Mr. Thomas, who was at the house late on Friday night, in fact the last person there, states that all seemed safe when he left. We learn that the property was insured in the sum of £2,000, or to about two-thirds of the damage. The general public greatly sympathise with the proprietor, who has always proved to those who have had any dealings with him, to be a man of strict integrity.

ANOTHER ACCOUNT.

DESTRUCTION OF 5000 BUSHELS OF GRAIN.

About midnight on Friday last the inhabitants of the peaceful village of Llanblethian were disturbed by loud cries of fire proceeding from the western part of the locality. The alarm was quickly followed by a loud explosion which was heard at some distance in the adjoining neighbourhood. It appears that near the Woollen Factory in Llanblethian were two fine new malt houses, each of three stories height, which have recently been erected by Mr. William Thomas, of Hill House. Mr. Thomas, well-known as one of the most extensive maltsters in the Vale of Glamorgan, and formerly carrying on a large business also at the Town Mills, Cowbridge, had devoted much time and expense to the establishment of these malthouses in the most improved style with various modern appliances, and in a well selected spot on the margin of the river. Smoke and a little flame were first noticed about midnight by Mr. Nicholl of Hill-terrace who was passing near the premises, and an adjoining housekeeper, named Mrs. Smith, proceeded to awaken the inhabitants of the village in order that their aid might be secured, when with

Town Mills, Cowbridge, had devoted much time and expense to the establishment of these malthouses in the most improved style with various modern appliances, and in a well selected spot on the margin of the river. Smoke and a little flame were first noticed about midnight by Mr. Nicholl of Hill-terrace who was passing near the premises, and an adjoining housekeeper, named Mrs. Smith, proceeded to awaken the inhabitants of the village in order that their aid might be secured, when with a violent crash, compared by some present to the bursting of a cannon, and by others to a thunder-clap, the fire burst through the northern pine-end of the largest building. Although a considerable supply of water was close at hand, and a powerful pump, which was used to raise water for the use of the establishment, in excellent condition, yet the hose and all communication being destroyed by the fire almost immediately after its first outburst no means of extinguishing the conflagration were available, but the simple plan of passing buckets of water from hand to hand, and casting them upon the burning mass. In doing this, however, all the neighbours and inhabitants of the village worked with the utmost energy and perseverance, and had their efforts been supplemented by two or three fire-engines some effect would undoubtedly have been produced. As it was, however, the nearest engine lay at Cardiff. The fire after reaching the open air rapidly gained ground, and soon ignited the adjoining malthouse. Both buildings were constructed of the best lias limestone walls, and in a substantial manner, but the interior consisted of a series of wooden floors, supported by massive joists and beams of pitch pine. When these large pieces of timber which, in a building of this kind are naturally as dry as possible, were fairly kindled, the whole of the establishment was evidently beyond the reach of any ordinary means for saving the property. In about an hour after the first alarm the top floors, laden with heavy weights of barley, began to fall in, and as each successive storey gave way and the devouring element leapt high into the dark night, the spectacle presented to the numbers who viewed it from the surrounding high ground was intensely grand and impressive. Situated as the building was, surrounded by houses with thatched roofs and easily combustible, it is entirely owing to the calmness of the night that the dwellings of several neighbours were not involved in the conflagration. Fortunately no pieces of the burning timber were drifted about, and the whole of the ashes settled down in an incandescent mass of the depth of about six feet where the fire first broke out. As to the cause of the fire that has not at present been in the least discovered, The last workman on duty, who was an experienced maltster, left the premises, it is stated, at about nine o'clock on Friday night, leaving the whole of the malthouses in a state of apparent safety. The whole, or nearly the whole of the barley and buildings are fortunately covered by insurance, the loss falling upon the County Fire Office and the Provincial Insurance Office.

Those who saw this fire, and the rapidity with which all the expensive structure, and a great part of the finest selected barley of the recent harvest of the Vale, was reduced to ashes in so short a time that before an engine from Cardiff (which certainly was not telegraphed for, but which could not, if telegraphed for, have got into action before the fire had destroyed everything), those who witnessed the destruction, whether the old inhabitants who looked on with surprise, declaring that such a thing as a fire never happened in Llanblethian during all their experience, or the most casual observer, must have been impressed with the necessity of providing a fire engine at Cowbridge to meet a similar contingency should it occur. The numerous friends of Mr. Thomas and his family will be relieved to learn that the premi-